

How to Succeed With Volunteers-In-Parks

60-Minute Module Series

RECRUITMENT

Training Guide

**National Park Service
Volunteers-In-Parks Program**



How To SUCCEED With VOLUNTEERS-IN-PARKS

60-Minute Module Series

Introduction
Program Planning
Needs Assessment
Motivation
Designing Jobs
Recruitment
Interviewing
Orientation
Training
Safety Management
Supervision
Delegation
Performance Reviews
Recognition

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INTRODUCTION

When we are pressed to fill vacant volunteer positions, we sometimes overlook the importance of finding the right volunteer for each open position. Everyone can relate to the impact on the volunteer and the organization when the wrong person is recruited (i.e., the volunteer feels incompetent and/or unfulfilled; performance and retention problems may surface; the NPS does not get the job done well; and resistance to hiring more volunteers may occur).

Successful recruitment involves marketing your park's volunteer needs to the segment of people who can best fill your needs while simultaneously filling their own (e.g., finding a graduate student who needs an internship in cultural resources when you are looking for a person to focus on restoration of a historic structure). Recruitment is not merely following prescribed techniques to attract potential volunteers (displaying posters, writing public service announcements, etc.), but rather designing a strategy that targets the right volunteer(s) and then uses an appropriate outreach technique to invite them to consider becoming part of the park team.

It is difficult to isolate the topic of recruitment, because its ultimate success is intertwined with the development of good jobs and with having an organization prepared to utilize volunteers' time and talents effectively when they arrive. It is important, however, to examine how potential volunteers are invited to consider the NPS, particularly if this function is not centralized. Even if most volunteers go through a central recruitment process, all staff and volunteers within the NPS are a significant part of its informal volunteer recruitment team. Thus, the principles of recruitment should be useful for staff whether they carry out this function themselves or are ambassadors for the Volunteers-In-Parks program.

PURPOSE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The **Purpose** of this module is to explore targeted volunteer recruitment, a strategy of invitation to reach the best people to fill park volunteer positions.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, participants will be able to:

1. Describe successful recruitment, including outcomes.
2. Design an effective recruitment strategy.
3. Develop a recruitment message that works.
4. Describe the characteristics of effective recruiters.

GENERAL NOTES TO TRAINER

1. This workshop is in a suggested format. Feel free, however, to personalize it with your own stories. Also, phrase questions and activities in a manner most attuned to your participants.
2. Recruitment is a primary need in all NPS VIP programs, so it is helpful to understand the key concepts of recruitment. In many ways, staff or other volunteers are involved in the recruitment every time a volunteer returns. Volunteers must continually have their needs met, and may need assistance in working through their barriers to volunteering even after they become involved.
3. This module would be most helpful if presented after the modules on Program Planning, Needs Assessment, Motivation, and Designing Jobs.
4. This module stresses that recruitment is the invitation to **consider** volunteering. It would, therefore, be helpful to follow it up with a session on interviewing, because it is at that time that the actual selection and placement occur.
5. Many resource materials on volunteer management cover the topic of volunteer recruitment. Perhaps the most comprehensive coverage can be found in *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*, by Susan Ellis. (See “Resources” in this module for additional materials.)
6. When recruiting off-site, use the 8-minute video “Come Join Us” to show your audience the wide variety of parks, volunteers and volunteer jobs that are part of the National Park System.

WORKSHOP OUTLINE

Transparency Handout	Section	Method of Presentation	Time
T-1 H-1 T-2 T-3	Introduction Activity Learning Objectives Key Concepts	Activity/Presentation	5 minutes
T-3 H-1 T-4 H-2 T-5 T-6	Concept 1 Matching needs of volunteer/agency	Interactive Presentation	10 minutes
T-3 H-1 T-7 H-3 H-4 H-5 H-6 H-7 H-8 H-9	Concept 2 Appropriate targeting is key	Brainstorming Group Activity	20 minutes
T-3 H-1 T-8 H-10 T-9 H-11 H-12	Concept 3 Recruitment message has three elements	Interactive Presentation	15 minutes
T-3 H-1 T-10	Concept 4 Use best people possible to recruit volunteers	Interactive Presentation	5 minutes
T-3 H-1	Summary/Wrap-Up/ Evaluation	Summary Remarks	5 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 60 minutes

TRAINER'S NOTES

INTRODUCTION

Time: 5 minutes

T-1: Definition: Volunteer Recruitment

Opening Exercise

Have participants jot down their thoughts on a definition of Volunteer Recruitment. Ask a few people to share their ideas.

Debrief of Exercise:

If any of their definitions imply that all respondents were automatically invited to become volunteers, share with them the working definition of recruitment: a process to attract and invite people to **consider** involvement (see T-1).

T-2: Learning Objectives

During the interview and screening process, both the individual and the organization mutually decide if a match has been made. The exception to this is when the organization needs a large number of people for short-term assignments, and no skills or previous experience are necessary.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

Continue by sharing a few introductory comments regarding the significance of thoughtful recruitment. You might also start by de-mystifying the process by sharing the most revealing statistic about recruitment strategies: the 1993 Gallup Poll study on volunteering and giving discovered that people were more than four times as likely to volunteer when they were personally asked.

This discussion leads naturally into the purposes and learning objectives of this seminar. Indicate that this workshop is built on **four Key Concepts**. Share T-3 briefly and indicate that each concept will be covered in the seminar.

CONCEPT 1

Time: 10 minutes

For volunteer recruitment to be successful, the needs of the organization and the needs of the volunteer must both be met.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-4: Jigsaw Puzzle

T-5: Recruitment Techniques to Avoid

T-6: Why Do People Volunteer?

H-2: Why Do People Volunteer?

Presentation:

Too often we are tempted to fill positions without considering whether the needs of the park and the needs of the volunteer will be met. In our desperation to fill slots, we take the first person who is willing to do the job. It is much like the person who is in a rush to complete a jigsaw puzzle and tries to push the wrong piece into the puzzle. You may wish to use this analogy with the puzzle transparency, **T-4**, to illustrate what happens to the puzzle (organization) and the puzzle piece (volunteer) when this hasty method is used.

Sometimes we recruit people without taking into account whether the volunteer's needs will be met. Choose a few examples from the transparency **T-5** which highlight recruitment techniques to avoid.

- Bait and switch (You will lose volunteer trust)
- "There's nothing to it." (message: Any dummy can do it!)
- "We're desperate, anyone will do..." (How special does that feel?)
- Cast your nets and see who swims in... (Whoops! wrong fish!)
- "You're a Landscape Architect. We could use one of you!" (making assumptions)
- "We have lots of needs ... HELP!" (people respond to specifics)
- "I'm tired of doing it. Anyone else want to do it?" (wrong recruiter)

Ask participants why people volunteer

Brainstorm answers on a flip chart. Refer to H-2 for a more complete list.

The best strategy for finding the right volunteer is to use marketing principles which involve an exchange in values; i.e., our volunteer job also fits the person's interests and skills.

CONCEPT 2

Time: 20 minutes

Appropriate targeting is key to the success of your volunteer recruitment program.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-7: Targeted Recruitment

H-3: Who Volunteers?

H-4: Methods of Recruitment

H-5: Recruitment Techniques

H-6: Recruiting Volunteers from Special Populations

H-7: Recruitment Strategy Worksheet

H-8: VIP Opportunities Listing

H-9: The J-1 Visa Program for International Volunteers (IVIP)

Presentation:

Targeting is simply the process of identifying the best source of potential volunteers for a specific volunteer job.

Ask participants to name a particular volunteer job they currently would like to fill in their park. Brainstorm what potential recruitment sources they might use to find people with the skills they need to do that job. Encourage creativity in thinking of sources beyond the traditional ones, such as contacting trade publications, retired military organizations, high school counselors, asking staff about friends and family, etc. Potential sources are endless.

Exercise:

Use the Recruitment Strategy Worksheet to show participants how to target their recruitment efforts. Have them begin by working alone and coming up with three new sources of potential volunteers for an actual VIP job that needs to be filled in their park. Then ask participants to form groups of four, choose one of the four jobs, and identify (1) the types of people likely to have the skills needed for the job; (2) the best sources for finding applicants; (3) the best way to reach them. Ask two or three of the groups to report their findings. In conclusion, note how group knowledge and creativity, combined with a targeted approach, can identify excellent sources of qualified potential volunteers to fill important VIP positions.

CONCEPT 3

Time: 15 minutes

The recruitment message must describe, minimally, what the need is, how volunteers can help, and how volunteers will benefit.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-8: Essential Elements to Include in Recruitment Message

H-10: Preparing a Recruitment Message

T-9: Recruitment Message Statement of Need

H-11: Examples of Recruitment Messages

H-12: Preparing a Public Service Message

Presentation:

Effective recruitment begins with the message given to potential volunteers. Summarize the three key elements of the recruitment message.

1. The statement of need

Important to note that the need is not the agency's need but rather the need of the resource or park visitors. (Show illustrations of this in T-9, H-10)

2. How the volunteer can help

It is important to note that you have more impact by saying "You can help by...", not "Volunteers are needed..." (third person is not as appealing).

3. Benefits of the job

Answer how volunteers will be helping themselves by doing the job. (Either general benefits of working at the organization or specific benefits of doing a particular job.)

Show examples of how other organizations have used this formula to design their recruitment message. (If possible, design and share a message developed for your organization.)

Presentation:

Have participants write a recruitment message for the job(s) that they are working on throughout the workshop. Note that recruitment messages can take the form of a newspaper ad, a public service announcement, a poster, etc. Ask several to share what they have written.

CONCEPT 4:

Time: 5 minutes

It is important to use the most effective people possible to help recruit new volunteers.

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

T-10: Best Volunteer Recruiters

Presentation:

Point out that often the best recruiters of new volunteers are those already volunteering. Ask participants what qualities to look for before asking someone to officially serve in that role.

Suggest that the keys to success include all of their suggestions, but four characteristics are especially beneficial:

Volunteers who are:

- 1. Satisfied** with their volunteer work with the park.
- 2. Enthusiastic** (You may wish to note that the word enthusiasm ends with IASM - **I Am Sold Myself!**)
- 3. Articulate** (You need people who can express their pleasure so that others catch the fire!)
- 4. Connected** with the person or group being recruited. (People say yes to people they know and respect.)

SUMMARY/WRAP-UP/EVALUATION

Time: 5 minutes

T-3: Key Concepts

H-1: Key Concepts

Review the key concepts of volunteer recruitment.

END 60-MINUTE TRAINING

SUGGESTIONS FOR EXPANDED ACTIVITIES

1. If participants in this training are responsible for recruiting their own volunteers, additional in-depth training can be provided, using this module as a framework.
2. Looking at barriers people might have to volunteering in your organization can be done in small groups. Each group identifies five key barriers people might face. After each group generates its list, they pass it to another group; the new assignment is to discuss how and if the organization can do anything to help alleviate these barriers. Full group sharing would follow. This exercise sensitizes groups to the reasons why they might not be attracting volunteers and gives them an opportunity to discuss a number of issues: new volunteer job development, P.R. efforts regarding the agency and its clients, more flexibility in jobs, concentration on issues of staff resistance and climate, etc. This focus will lead to the design of new ways to make the organization more attractive to volunteers. Strategies for outreach could follow.
3. Have participants design some targeted recruitment messages using the information described in Concept 3 (the design of a recruitment message). If the organization has recruitment materials developed, share with the participants and critique them with reference to the three key elements.
4. Qualities of good recruiters may be best discussed by having participants think of a time when they said yes to a volunteer position. Remember what qualities the recruiter had or the techniques utilized that influenced them to say, "Yes!" Some participants may share experiences when they said yes because they were misled or had their arms twisted. Most often they will not express positive feelings about the experience. Others said yes to a recruiter who was not only enthusiastic and persuasive, but who also gave an accurate picture of the position and was interested in the benefits to the organization as well as to the volunteer. Using participants' own experiences is fertile material for many lessons in recruitment. It does take time to process these, but the insights gained are beneficial.

RESOURCES

1. Ellis, Susan. *The Volunteer Recruitment Book*. Order from Energize Associates, 5450 Wissahickon Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144, 1996
2. Knight, Veronica, Glen W. White, and Katherine Froehlich. *Training Manual for Working with Youth Volunteers Who Have Disabilities*, Youth Volunteer Corps of America, 1997.
3. MacDuff, Nancy. *Episodic Volunteering: Building the Short-Term Volunteer Program*, Walla Walla: MacDuff/Bunt Associates, 1991.
4. McCurley, Steve and Rick Lynch. *Volunteer Management: Mobilizing All the Resources of the Community*, 1996. Order from VM Systems, 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515.
5. McCurley, Steve. *Recruiting Volunteers for Difficult or Long-Term Assignments*. Order from VIM Systems, 1807 Prairie, Downers Grove, Illinois 60515
6. McCurley, Steve and Sue Vineyard. *101 Tips for Volunteer Recruitment*, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1988.
7. Stallings, Betty. *Resource Kit for Managers of Volunteers*. Order from Building Better Skills, 1717 Courtney Avenue, Suite 201, Pleasanton, California 94588.
8. Sutton, Charyn D. *Pass It On: Outreach to Minority Communities*, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, 1992.
9. Vineyard, Sue. *Secrets of Motivation: How to Get and Keep Volunteers and Staff*, Heritage Arts Publishing, 1991.